

**RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THE COUNTY OF SISKIYOU  
CONTINUING ITS DECLARATION OF A STATE OF EMERGENCY RELATED TO THE  
PROLIFERATION OF ILLEGAL CANNABIS CULTIVATION**

**WHEREAS**, Siskiyou County faces an unprecedented surge in illegal cannabis cultivation, now spanning over 15,000 acres and impacting more than 2,000 parcels across federal, state, tribal, and private lands; and

**WHEREAS**, since 2015, cannabis-related crime has risen dramatically, including murder, kidnapping, assault with deadly weapons, burglary, animal abuse, domestic violence, sexual assault, theft, and environmental crimes, and the Siskiyou County Sheriff's Office (SCSO) is currently investigating six active marijuana-related homicides and a variety of violent felony offenses; and

**WHEREAS**, the illegal cannabis industry in Siskiyou County operates as a highly organized and sophisticated enterprise, involving thousands of individuals working collaboratively in well-coordinated networks to sustain a multi-billion-dollar black market, and these operations are strategically structured to evade law enforcement detection, and are linked to transnational criminal organizations that exploit labor, traffic drugs, and engage in other criminal activities to maximize profits; and

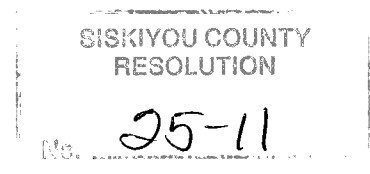
**WHEREAS**, this widespread illegal activity has triggered a rise in both violent and nonviolent crime within the community, and the organized criminal networks behind these operations continue to exacerbate the threat to public safety and community stability, fueling violent crime and labor exploitation, where the investigations have uncovered a sophisticated and well-coordinated network of suspected labor and human trafficking (additional details at Exhibit A); and

**WHEREAS**, these ongoing activities present a persistent risk to local ecosystems and natural resources, posing long-term threats to soil health, water quality, and biodiversity, further diminishing the quality of life for residents and the region; and ongoing environmental degradation through the use of illegal pesticides (additional details included in Exhibit A), and unpermitted, illegally constructed dwellings lacking proper sewage and potable water; and

**WHEREAS**, an estimated 2.25 million to 7.5 million gallons of water are consumed daily by illicit cannabis producers through illegal surface and groundwater extraction, depleting critical groundwater and surface water resources, which jeopardizes the lawful agricultural, recreational, private, and environmental use of water for thousands of residents and wildlife species; and

**WHEREAS**, significant site grading and illegal timber conversion, without proper permits, are occurring on many properties; and

**WHEREAS**, Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies recognize the presence of these transnational criminal organizations and Drug Trafficking Organizations (DTOs), and



these operations are non-compliant with local, State, and Federal regulations, and have partnered with County entities to combat significant cannabis-related crimes; and

**WHEREAS**, from July 11 to 13, 2023, Governor Gavin Newsom's Unified Cannabis Enforcement Taskforce (UCETF) carried out a major operation in Siskiyou County to combat the well-organized and sophisticated networks behind the illicit cannabis market, including transnational criminal organizations, resulting in the eradication of 67,045 illegal cannabis plants, the seizure of 8,019.75 pounds of processed cannabis valued at \$68.5 million, and the confiscation of a dozen unlawful firearms; and

**WHEREAS**, during 2021-2023, the Siskiyou County Marijuana Eradication Team (MET) conducted criminal investigations and eradication operations serving over 436 search warrants on private and public property, the results of which are detailed in Exhibit A; and

**WHEREAS**, SCSO personnel routinely seize illegal cannabis and other drugs transported in and out of the county to destinations throughout California and the United States (additional details at Exhibit A), and random sampling and analysis of seized cannabis have revealed the presence of illegal, foreign pesticides that are banned or not permitted in the United States; and

**WHEREAS**, the County Fire Warden has documented multiple fire starts originating from these encampments, often caused by unsafe and unregulated activities such as open flames, illegal electrical hookups, and improper waste disposal. Many of these fires have rapidly spread, fueled by hazardous materials and dry vegetation, and have escaped containment, threatening lives, property, and critical infrastructure. The increased fire risk places an enormous strain on local fire and emergency services and exacerbates the already high potential for catastrophic wildfires in the region; and

**WHEREAS**, emergency responders often struggle to locate 911 callers within these sprawling and densely populated encampments, where makeshift structures and unmarked, winding access routes create significant challenges for navigation and timely intervention. The inability to quickly reach those in need of medical or fire assistance further endangers both the occupants, who may be in life-threatening situations, and the emergency personnel, who risk their safety attempting to navigate hazardous and unpredictable conditions. This delay in response exacerbates the risk of serious injury or fatality and places additional strain on already overburdened emergency services; and

**WHEREAS**, even with the numerous and extensive efforts and activities to address these illegal cannabis activities, the cumulative impact of these issues described above is overwhelming the capacity of the Siskiyou County Sheriff's Office (SCSO), Environmental Health, Public Health, and other partner agencies, hindering their ability to uphold safety, health, and environmental standards throughout the region; and

**WHEREAS**, the Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors declared a Local State of Emergency because of the impacts of illegal cannabis cultivation on January 21, 2020; and

**WHEREAS**, the Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors has reviewed and continued its declaration of a Local State of Emergency since its initial adoption in accordance with law; and

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors continue its declaration of a "Local State of Emergency" due to the catastrophic impact of illicit cannabis cultivation on public health, safety, and quality of life in the county. Local and regional resources have been exhausted, and this emergency requires immediate assistance from federal, state, and regional agencies. Only with their support can the county combat the organized crime networks, which operate on an interstate scale with multi-billion-dollar funding.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors, in accordance with Government Code Section 8630(c), will review the status of the local emergency at least once every 60 days until the Board proclaims its termination.

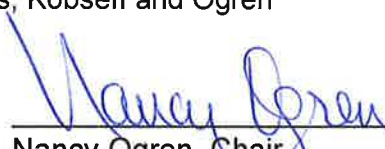
**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors proclaims that during this local emergency, the Director of Emergency Services and the county's emergency organizations shall exercise all powers, functions, and duties as prescribed by state law, local ordinances, and the Siskiyou Operational Emergency Area Operations Plan, as approved by the Board.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that a copy of this declaration be sent to the Secretary of the Governor's Office of Emergency Services (CAL OES), the State Water Resources Control Board, the Regional Water Quality Control Board, and the Environmental Protection Agency, requesting the release of any resources needed to assist in recovery from this ongoing crisis.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that this resolution shall supersede and replace Resolution 20-18.

**PASSED AND ADOPTED** by the Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors on January 21, 2025, by the following vote:

AYES:	Supervisors Valenzuela, Haupt, Harris, Kobseff and Ogren
NOES:	None
ABSENT:	None
ABSTAIN:	None

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Nancy Ogren, Chair  
Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors

ATTEST: Laura Bynum, County Clerk

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(Deputy) (Date)

## **EXHIBIT A**

### **CONT. - RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THE COUNTY OF SISKIYOU CONTINUING ITS DECLARATION OF A STATE OF EMERGENCY RELATED TO THE PROLIFERATION OF ILLEGAL CANNABIS CULTIVATION**

#### **Eradication Efforts:**

During 2021-2023, the Siskiyou County Marijuana Eradication Team (MET) conducted criminal investigations and eradication operations, serving over 436 search warrants on private and public property. These efforts yielded:

- |                                 |                         |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1) Plants Eradicated:           | 718,205                 |
| 2) Processed Flower (lbs.):     | 116,401                 |
| 3) Arrests:                     | 211                     |
| 4) Banned Pesticides Locations: | 85                      |
| 5) Firearms Seized:             | 74                      |
| 6) Retail Value:                | \$1.48 to \$4.4 billion |
| 7) Felony Tax Evasion:          | \$147.1 million         |

The scale of these findings illustrates an exponential growth in illegal cannabis operations within Siskiyou County, demonstrating the increasingly sophisticated and pervasive nature of these networks. This sharp increase underscores the urgency and necessity of proclaiming a local state of emergency to mobilize additional resources and implement stronger measures to protect public health, safety, and the environment.

#### **Illegal Pesticide Use and Environmental Consequences:**

Illegal cannabis cultivation sites are tied to severe environmental violations, including the use of toxic, unlawful pesticides that degrade California's natural resources and endanger workers and the public. The Unified Cannabis Enforcement Taskforce (UCETF), co-chaired by the Department of Cannabis Control (DCC) and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and coordinated by Cal OES, actively collaborates with over two dozen federal, state, local, and tribal partners to disrupt these criminal networks and safeguard the state; and

Those cultivating illegal cannabis are known to use illegal and often banned pesticides obtained from outside the United States. These pesticides are applied through illegal fumigation, containing highly volatile compounds, and are dispersed without adherence to state and federal regulations. These substances are extremely toxic to humans, animals, and the environment. In 2023, Siskiyou County investigators uncovered the emerging threat of these illegal pesticides. Samples of illegal cannabis collected in Siskiyou County were analyzed by the California National Guard Civil Support Team (CST) revealing the presence of illegal pesticides containing a cocktail of 23 volatile pesticides, including:

- 1) 23 that are dangerously and improperly used as a fumigant;
- 2) 15 that are absent from the list of tested pesticides by the State of California;

- 3) 12 that attack the Central Nervous System (CNS);
- 4) 8 that are listed as carcinogenic according to California Proposition 65;
- 5) 6 that are groundwater pollutants;
- 6) 5 that are not approved for any use in the United States; and
- 7) 3 that are toxic air containments.

It is also important to note that since 2023, illegal pesticides obtained from outside the United States have been found in other California counties, including Trinity, Alameda, Contra Costa, San Bernardino, Los Angeles, Riverside, San Diego, Butte, and Fresno, as well as in other states like Oklahoma and Maine.

During eradication efforts, investigators have experienced symptomatic exposure to these hazardous pesticides, often requiring medical intervention. Even when wearing personal protective equipment (PPE), symptoms such as respiratory distress, skin irritation, dizziness, and neurological effects have been reported, underscoring the severe health risks posed by these toxic substances. The pervasive contamination at these sites presents a significant danger not only to law enforcement and emergency personnel but also to nearby communities and ecosystems.

Numerous enforcement stops have uncovered both licensed and unlicensed distributors in possession of pesticide-contaminated cannabis originating from illegal cultivation sites in Siskiyou County. During investigations, individuals admitted to transporting this illicit cannabis to licensed facilities, where it is mixed into the legal supply chain, creating a deeply troubling and dangerous situation. As a result, unsuspecting consumers are at risk of purchasing and using cannabis tainted with hazardous chemicals, without any awareness of the contamination. This widespread infiltration of toxic and unregulated cannabis into the legal market poses a severe public health threat, as these foreign pesticides are known to have devastating effects on human health, including neurological damage, respiratory issues, and long-term carcinogenic risks. The contamination of the legal cannabis market undermines regulatory efforts and endangers the well-being of consumers across California and beyond.

#### **Human and Labor Trafficking:**

Investigators have uncovered a sophisticated and well-coordinated network of suspected labor and human trafficking embedded within the illegal cannabis operations. This network exploits vulnerable individuals, many of whom are transported from other regions or countries under false pretenses. In numerous instances, individuals have reported working under duress, with threats of violence made against them or their families if they attempt to leave or report the conditions. Evidence suggests that some workers are subjected to inhumane living conditions, are deprived of basic rights, and are monitored or controlled to prevent escape, highlighting the dire human cost associated with these criminal enterprises. Additionally, over the years, these unpermitted and makeshift structures have led to multiple carbon monoxide poisoning deaths, caused by the unsafe use of generators and heating equipment in enclosed spaces, further illustrating the extreme dangers faced by those living and working in these hazardous environments.

**Transportation:**

Between 2022-2024, enforcement stops on State and local highways in Siskiyou County have yielded the following:

1) Methamphetamine:	214,436.70 grams
2) Fentanyl:	153,082.80 grams
3) Cocaine:	35,394.60 grams
4) Processed Cannabis:	54,500.50 pounds
5) Heroin:	13,827.50 grams
6) Cannabis Plants:	4,956.00
7) Arrests:	145
8) Firearms Seized:	24

These significant drug seizures not only reflect the pervasiveness of illegal cannabis operations but also expose a broader and more dangerous nexus of criminal activity, including the trafficking of highly lethal substances like fentanyl and methamphetamine. The presence of these drugs underscores the clear and present danger posed to public safety, as fentanyl has been linked to a nationwide epidemic of overdose deaths. The intersection of these illicit drug markets further highlights the need for a comprehensive emergency response to disrupt the well-established networks that endanger the health and well-being of our communities.